

## Chapter Fifteen – Samson Rises and Falls

After the whole generation of Moses and Joshua had died, the Israelites again turned against God who had saved them from slavery in Egypt and they worshipped the false god, Baal. Without the protection of God, they were defeated and ruled by the Philistines, who were fine soldiers. God still loved the Israelites, however, and wanted to save them. One day, God sent an angel to a barren woman and said, “You will have a son and you will name him Samson. He must not cut his hair for his strength will be in his hair. You yourself must not take any wine or strong drink. The Lord will deliver the Israelites from the Philistines through your son.”

Samson grew up into a fine strong man. He fell in love with a young Philistine woman and he wanted to marry her. On his way to the lady’s home, a young lion sprang at him. By means of the strength given to him by God, Samson tore the lion apart with his bare hands.

On the night of the wedding, Samson gave a riddle to the guests of his wife and bet that they could not figure out the answer. The guests could not work out the answer and felt so annoyed and angry that they forced his wife to trick him into telling them the answer. Otherwise, they said, they would kill her and burn her father’s house down. At first Samson was not willing to give the answer to his wife but he could not stand her tears. When he learnt that she had tricked him, he was furious and went back home at the end of the wedding. His wife did not go with him.

Some days later Samson went to visit his wife but his father-in-law had already given her to the best man at the wedding. He said, “I thought you were angry with her and would not take her as your wife.” Samson was now angry with all the Philistines including his father-in-law and the wedding guests. He burnt the crops in the Philistine area. When the Philistines found that it was Samson’s father-in-law causing the trouble, they burned his house down and killed Samson’s wife. Samson still loved his wife and, out of revenge, killed many Philistines. The Philistine leaders tried to capture him but he was too strong for them. Because he caused the Philistines so much trouble, Samson became the leader of the Israelites and led the people for twenty years.

Later Samson fell in love with another Philistine woman called Delilah. The Philistine leaders never gave up trying to capture him so they offered Delilah money to find out the secret of his strength. Over and over again she asked him to reveal the secret but he would not tell her. She kept pleading with him, however, until he told her finally, “My strength comes from my hair.” That night she betrayed him and cut off all his hair, and led the Philistine leaders to capture and blind him. Samson tried to fight back but he was too weak.

The Philistine leaders made Samson do a lot of hard labour while in prison. Day after day, however, his hair grew longer and longer. The Philistine leaders decided to get together to thank one of their gods and celebrate their victory over Samson. By now his strength was almost fully restored. He was sent for to entertain the Philistine leaders in a huge building, perhaps a temple. He prayed to God for strength and pushed the two main pillars of the building with all his strength. The building came crashing down and Samson died along with thousands of the Philistines. Samson had killed more people at his death than he had killed during his life.



*Samson kills a lion*

Questions:

1. Why did God give special strength to Samson?
2. How did Samson show his strength? Give TWO examples.
3. Why did the Philistines hate Samson so much?
4. Why did Samson eventually tell the secret of his strength to his wife, Delilah?
5. Why did Delilah agree to betray her husband?
6. Imagine you were Samson praying in prison. Write out his prayer.